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ARTS FEATURE:
Camino Real



RIDE REVIEW:
Chrysler 200

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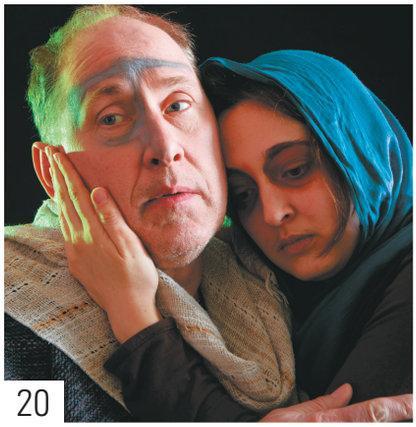


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FROM THE EDITOR | Andy Lien

It's the end of June already and Pride is here in the Twin Cities. June 23rd marked my two-year anniversary as Managing Editor at Lavender Media and I love celebrating it with a huge party. Documenting and covering the goings-on of this community is an extremely rewarding vocation and there's no time better than Pride to really feel both the challenge and the jackpot of what we do here at Lavender. Some of you are new to the readership, having joined us during the marriage equality coverage or after picking up the Pride Issue. Others have been with us since the beginning in 1995. Now seems like a good time to offer a little orientation into what Lavender is, a refresher of sorts.

Lavender is an independently published magazine for the GLBT community in Minnesota and surrounding states, as well as on the internet which serves a global audience. The umbrella of Lavender Media covers *Lavender Magazine* which is a glossy magazine and published every two weeks; the online magazine which is available via the internet as well as Newsstand for iPads and iPhones; the website at www.LavenderMagazine.com; podcasts including "Elevating the Everyday with Ross Sveback" and "Big Gay News;" and the Big Gay News news feed which just blew past 53,000 followers on Twitter. We're small and busy with a big reach.

What's better is that Lavender is free and can also be accessed anonymously. People can casually pick one up at one of the hundreds of distribution sites in Minnesota or access it online from the comfort of their electronic devices. Depending upon whether a person is out of the closet or not, this can be an important facet in having an outlet to the greater GLBT community. Also, the fact that it's free is crucial in making it accessible for a community that changes from day to day.

What keeps it free are our advertisers. Lavender's mission is to connect our readers to what's going on in the GLBT community, and to connect the GLBT community with our advertisers. That's what enables the rest of the publication to happen. Lavender has been supported by this community since 1995 and Lavender has succeeded with a solid business model–we don't publish more than is paid for. And, the companies that advertise with what is still considered a "special interest" publication get plenty of kudos for doing so–as do you. We're grateful that you patronize the advertisers in our pages which is why they continue to advertise with us. It's a harmonious symbiotic relationship.

I was thinking of a pretty solid analogy for what Lavender is, and a coffee shop came to mind.

If we were a coffee shop, you could sit in our incongruously situated location in a former Kingdom Hall for Jehovah's Witnesses at 38th and Chicago in Minneapolis and enjoy the free coffee and pastries we're serving. Our clientele is queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, straight, questioning, and everything in between... young and old, in the closet and out. What we offer–coffee and pastries with some special events and shows–tends to be mostly locally sourced with some national and global varieties available as well. Everything is free, thanks to our advertisers. We've got open mic night and sometimes get political which means that some people love the debates and some people avoid them. Likewise, some of the brews are not tastes that fit everyone's palate, but that's why we try to offer as many as we can.

Our inventory changes every two weeks so there's sure to be something new to taste with regularity–26 rotating menus a year--always including what will be of interest to the GLBT community. Our calendar is set to attract people to specific topics so that we can continue to provide readers with free coffee and pastries as well as to match people up with advertisers who can provide them with products or services they'd like to buy. When we have specials like the Wedding Issue and Pride Issue, we have more advertising that pays for more goodies for everyone to enjoy–special guests are brought in and we serve a greater variety of flavors, and we have plans to expand the specials to be more frequent with more variety.

The clientele is diverse and we like to leave a suggestion box out there for input. We've got a calendar of events online that serves as our bulletin board where anyone can post any of their events that are of interest to the community for free. And, our Facebook page is a place where we highlight special features or events as well as take feedback and respond to some questions. Our owner is onsite, I guess I'd be the manager, and a small crew of dedicated people make this place work and produce what we present to you with pride.

Unlike most coffee shops, Lavender is always open–24 hours a day, 7 days a week–providing the GLBT community with dedicated and safe space for discussion, food for thought, and flavors to suit a great number of tastes.

So, welcome to Lavender. Or, if you've been here before, thank you for your continued patronage.

I hope to see you at Pride.

With thanks,

Andy □


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Gaudiamus Igitur…A Memoir

Harvard Commencement makes grand spectacle, and one's Fiftieth Reunion a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

May 30, 525 Class of 1963 members celebrated their longevity and the University's 362nd Commencement (although founded in 1636, Commencement wasn't initiated until 1642). Per tradition, the soon-to-be-graduated Seniors lined both sides of the path in Harvard Yard, cheering and applauding as we ancients (the oldest, Class of '30) processed into Tercentenary Theater.

Time, as time will, had wrought significant changes. Security guards checked bags and wanded all entrants, while on a more prosaic level, cherished institutions were no more: Cronin's and twenty-five-cent draft beers, Elsie's ambrosial fifty-cent steak sandwiches. My own personal change involved shifting from alumna to alumnus.

Born during World War II, 1963 matriculated in 1959–before the Bay of Pigs, Loving vs. Virginia, Stonewall, or any inkling of same-sex marriage. There were whispers about homos and lesbians, but nothing of the *B* or *T* of today's rainbow acronym. Gender dictated behavior. In 1959, men and women attended the same classes with the same professors, but received different diplomas. The Class of 1963 was the first in which every graduate's AB read "Harvard."

For today's undergrads, replacing silence and shame, gayness is highly visible through numerous groups, including the Harvard Queer Students and Allies (QSA). Would that outreach reach back half a century? We had each submitted our personal histories for the fat, crimson Class Book that we'd pored over before arrival. Everyone's badge had a first name–mine read, "E.B."

How would classmates react to Ethan? "Were you in Holmes Hall?" a woman asked, spotting the "Boatner" (Dorms were *not* co-ed) "Yes." "It looks good on you!" she enthused.

And then, the Class Portrait on the Widener Library steps. I had four choices: All alums and families; all alums; just Harvard; just Radcliffe. Which to order? I stood first with the alumni, then the alumnae, where the woman beside me whispered, "You may be in the wrong group…" I explained and she exclaimed, "Wonderful! I'm proud to stand next to you!" I ordered both. A personal victory, yes, but consider also that Harvard's President, Drew Gilpin Faust, is a woman, our Class Day Speaker the freshly-minted, honorary LLD, Oprah Winfrey.

A *lot* has changed in half a century. □



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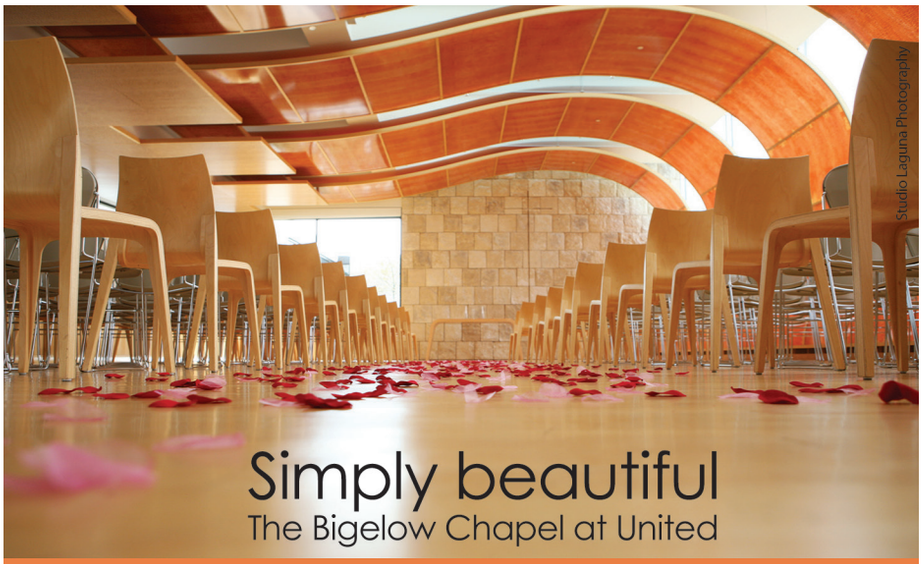


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And the time for peace is here.

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By Walker Pearce, age 16, Dreher High School, 1962 Literary Yearbook

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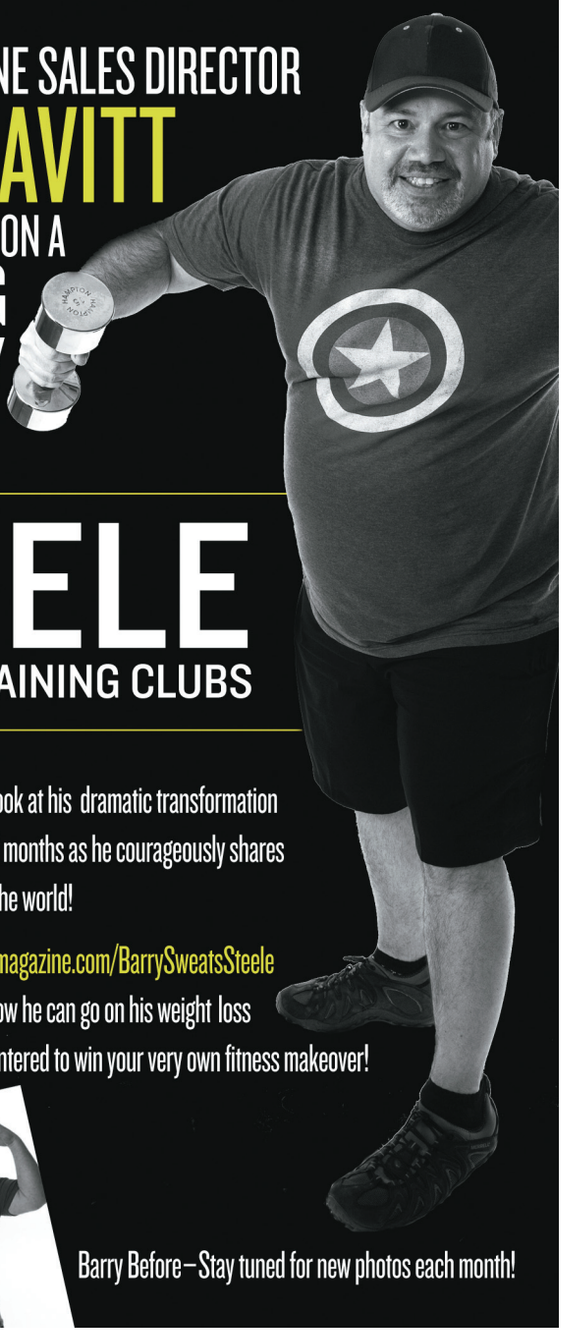
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"BEAR" WITH ME (WHILE I TELL YOU ABOUT) ...

by Barry Leavitt

DRIVE-IN NIGHT AT THE MOVIES
Saturday, July 6 • 5:45pm
Vali-Hi Drive-In, 11260 Hudson Blvd. N., Lake Elmo
Join the Minneapolis Movie Bears and the North Country Bears for their first drive-in event of 2013. Each summer the NC Bears and the Movie Bears host a drive-in night, and this social event is always a favorite for many. Best of all, you don't need to be a bear, cub or otter to attend. There is lots of socializing and eating prior to the first film. All the food, hot dogs, hamburgers, brats, and side dishes are supplied, so you're only responsible for bringing your own movie snacks and beverages. The drive-in shows three currently showing movies. The first one starts at dusk and the last one gets over around 5am. Stay for one film or all of them. The movies playing that evening will be announced about a week in advance. Get updates and more info on Facebook at "First Drive-In Event with the North Country Bears and the Movie Bears."

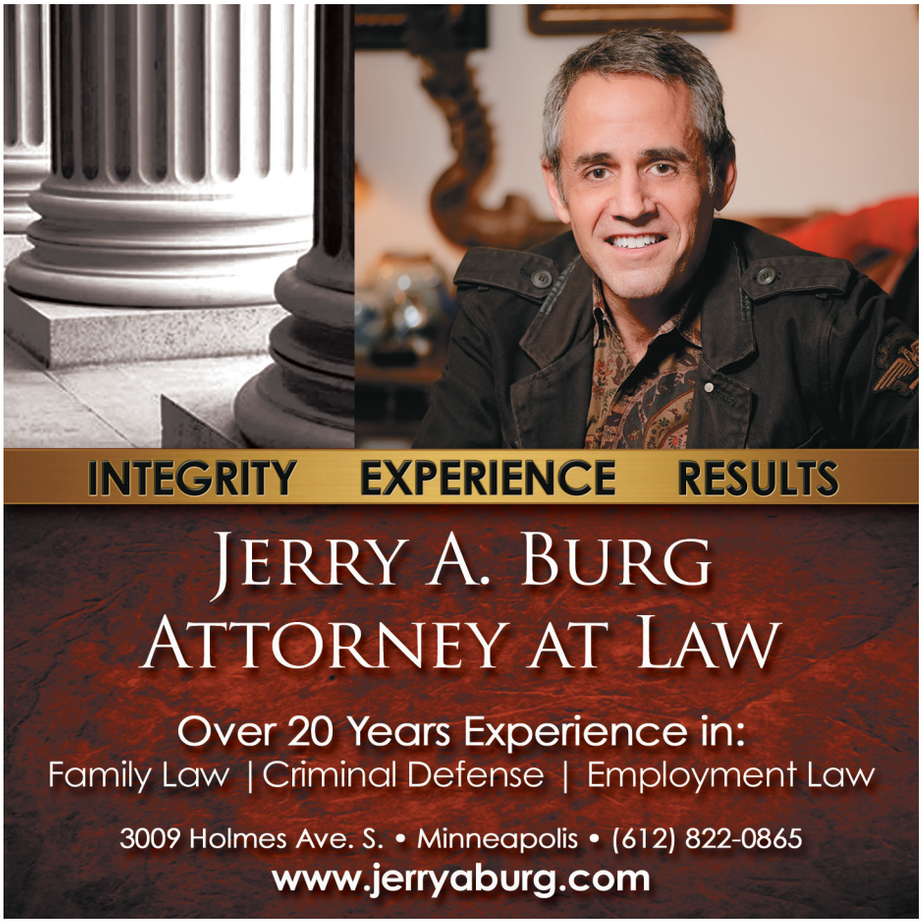
SAUSAGE FEST
Friday, July 12 • 5:30 to 7:30pm
Nonna Rosa's Patio • 4168 W. Broadway Ave. • Robbinsdale
Yes, they went there…and so can you. Nonna Rosa and Lavender Magazine invite you to Sausage Fest, "The Ultimate Meet + Eat". The event is part of Robbinsdale's Whiz Bang Days, and will feature Nonna Rosa's famous homemade Italian sausage sandwiches – SOLD BY THE INCH (6 inch minimum)! Hangout on the beautiful Nonna Rosa patio (in their ballroom if it rains) and enjoy your meat and your favorite cocktail, beer or wine. And while on the subject of meat, there will also have a meat raffle, and you can register to win great prizes, including a $100 Nonna Rosa gift card. Admission is FREE. Go to Facebook and search Sausage Fest at Nonna Rosa, and checkout the venue at www.nonnarosawinebar.com.



RADIOACTIV PRESENTED BY TOXIQUE EVENTS
Friday, July 12 • 10pm to close
Saloon • 830 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
Wesley Traen and TJ Oconnor have been in the nightclub scene for 5+ years, and felt something was missing, so they're taking it up a notch with an event that captures the essence of a Nuclear Wasteland. Creative decorations, a top DJ, and special performances are all on tap for this big event. The setting for RadioActiv will be dark and creepy, but upbeat with the hot beats of Chicago's DJ Phil DaBeatz, and two guest performances by DiDa Ritz from RuPaul's Drag Race Season 4. Get all the details at www.facebook.com/ToxiqueEvents and follow them on Twitter: @ToxiqueEvents











Clybourne Park. Photo by Michael Brosilow

CLYBOURNE PARK

Through Aug. 4
Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls.
(612) 377-2224
www.guthrietheater.org

This triple crown 2012 Best Play winner -the Tony, the Pulitzer, the Olivier- is given a vivid staging at the Guthrie directed by Lisa Peterson. To be clear, you don't have to know anything about the actual 1959 drama, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, that playwright Bruce Norris has used as his inspiration, to fully enjoy *Clybourne Park*. It simply imagines the white married couple -Bev and Russ- moving out of the house that will soon be occupied by Hansberry's black family, a couple that does not appear in the '59 original. But Norris sets his play in that year – the year *Raisin* is set and was first produced.

Guthrie regulars Kathryn Meisle and Bill McCallum as Bev and Russ capture Norris's uncanny understanding of the limited consciousness most white people lived within during that time without becoming overly and glibly satirical. In other words, for all their naivete, as maddening as it is to us today, Bev and Russ are poignantly human. Norris underscores this by showing that the era's limits and politesse have sadly hampered their ability to deal with the suicide of their son who had been stationed in Korea, as well as their ability to stand up effectively to the smugness of white neighbors who resent that they've sold the house to a family of color.

Act Two imagines the house 50 years later when a diverse group of neighbors discuss zoning and building code issues. It's an act packed with clever, witty, and sometimes refreshingly raw exchanges that challenge the politically correct way we often tend to communicate with one another. Compare it to high caliber television. It's great for laughs, and even certain amount of insight, but it lacks the craft of Act One. Hence, it undercuts the moving final sequence which moreover, Peterson has not adequately explored. She sometimes has a discomfort with certain types of male characters: we saw it last year in her direction of Peter Hansen's Brick in Guthrie's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and this year with Steven Lee Johnson's take on Kenneth in *Clybourne Park*. Thankfully, Hansen, who now appears in *Clybourne Park*, is in top form in a transformational performance well directed this time around by Peterson.

QUEER!

Through July 14
Lowry Lab, 350 St. Peter St., St. Paul
1 (800) 838-3006
www.brownpapertickets.com/event/38095

Now that we move beyond the cocoon of the marriage equality campaign, other issues that have long been brewing in the GLBT community are surfacing. These include Uganda, Bradley Manning, workplace discrimination, and as touchy as any of these are the negative attitudes held by many gays, lesbians, and some allies against others of gender and sexual 'otherness.' Even some non-assimilationists are guilty of this.

Immanuel Elliott and Cassandra Snow have comprised a collection of monologues and short scenes from submissions to Gadfly Theatre and from interviews. As cast member Patience Hughes explains "we wanted to showcase the common thread that binds those of us in the queer community and tell stories of people that you wouldn't otherwise hear." Titled *Queer!*, it premiered in early June at the National BE-CAUSE conference presented by BOP (Bisexual Organizing Project) and is now at St. Paul's Lowry Lab.

Erica Fields shares, "I direct six characters and am cast as one. Of those characters, two identify as bisexual; one identifies as fluid and probably will identify as pan or bi some day; one identifies as polyamorous; one asexual; and a transgender woman and a lesbian. The two bisexual characters are older. Mine is a middle-aged bisexual woman, empty nester, who is a recovering alcoholic going through menopause. Her struggle with identifying as bisexual is with the preconceived notions that people have about bisexuals being promiscuous and oversexed. Being an older person she has trouble relating with younger bisexual people and also the idea that bi is a transphobic identity in the eyes of some younger LGBT people. She just wants to be allowed to be herself and not some stereotype."

Fields continues "the other bisexual character (Jim Larsen) is married, and open about his sexual identity to his wife and children. He relates that he had been in a relationship with a man that ended and (how) the gay man's friends rallied against him because he was not gay. This hurt as they were supposed to have been supportive, but once he broke up with their gay friend they rejected the bisexual man. He was made to feel like a fake intellectual because the gay men did not get that being bisexual is not the same as gay. It is not the fear of coming out as gay - it is being bisexual."

Additionally, she points out "each letter in the acronym, LGBT, has its own biases towards the others and there is a sense of divisiveness and casual prejudice



Rain Follows the Plow. Photo by Carl Atiya Swanson/Savage Umbrella

between the communities. The other characters, asexual (Meagan Kedrowski) and polyamorous (Siddeeqah Shabazz), talk about how their identity is not really understood by the gay and lesbian community. They feel they are not fully accepted as equals. The transgender character (Rachel Harvey) is an MTF who is gender-specific in her identity as a woman. She tells of the lack of control she had during the transition as the medical and mental health professionals pushed and pulled her through the standards-of-care gamut until in the end she was left adrift to survive after losing it all. Later, she tells that while dating a lesbian, her girlfriend's lesbian friends reject her and her girlfriend because, in their eyes, she is not really a woman. Men reject her for being either too much or too little of either gender."

Queer! addresses the lack of cohesiveness in a GLBT community more permeated with its own categorical (un)thinking and misinformation than reported in mainstream media and even in much of the GLBT media. Fields stresses the importance of uniting in the service of finding solutions to problems. She points out, "As my character says, by banding together, more states passed marriage equality and more openly queer politicians were elected because we came together as a group. We can make it happen and we can be cohesive when we put aside our personal prejudices and biases."

RAIN FOLLOWS THE PLOW

July 5 -23
Playwrights Center, 2301 E. Franklin Av., Mpls.
www.savageumbrella.org

A radio personality in the Dust Bowl era lays the groundwork for this new Savage Umbrella collaboration. Playwright Rachel Nelson shares: "At its heart, this is a play about how we map 'American values,' specifically notions of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism, onto relationships. What does it mean to live in a country founded on the belief that this land was destined to us, and that it is ours to use as we see fit? How do these notions spill unconsciously into the way we think about our own bodies and the bodies of those we love? We wanted to look at the American landscape through ideas of abundance and lack, and what better place than the Dust Bowl, with its totally physical manifestation of what happens when we take endlessly? So often, we're left with dust."

Nelson adds, "I was really interested in the ways that all of these complexities suggest queerness in the broadest sense. As a queer writer and performer, I'm always looking for the ways that normative structures collapse and reconfigure in a way that is sexually, socially, and politically queered. When you are exploring the ways that spaces can be queered in performance, questions of history, space, and relationships become really interesting. Queerness manifests in *Rain Follows the Plow* in three ways. First, totally literally. The plot revolves around two heterosexual couples who are exploring same-sex attractions and identity confusion. Second, the concepts of the play suggest and ask questions of finding queer spaces in identity politics and also in our notions of history and truth. No character is fixed and they all confuse traditional roles and simple definition. And thirdly, we are mapping out these complex locations visibly through the use of staging that asks the audience to re-examine the linear ways that we see."

THE GERIATRICAL THEATRICAL

Through July 28
Plymouth Playhouse,
2705 Annapolis Ln, Plymouth
(763) 553-1600
www.plymouthplayhouse.com

This wondrous new musical revolves around the idea that life is a game to be played and enjoyed to its fullest. A casino dealer named Ailments, charismatically played by Claudia Wilkens, is a sort of senior-ranking angel who metes out aches, pains, and debilitations to the aging. Richard Ooms, Wilkens's real life husband, plays Louie, a curmudgeon, who (like most of us would) tries to bargain with her. The chemistry between the two is marvelous and Ooms's solo about Louie's deceased wife, *Twilight Savings Time*, is very touching indeed.

The genius of John Fenn's script is that on one hand it's light and airy as a feather, yet it's a profoundly spiritual assertion that simple changes in how one personally sees what life and the world hand you can–and will–shift your life and consciousness to a better place. It's an idea that's been around for a while but has seldom been manifested so fully and richly in a stage work.

Drew Jansen's music and lyrics are quite simply his best ever. He and Fenn are on the same delightfully philosophical page with director Bain Boehlke. Phil Ross and Dee Noah are vibrant as a couple who has managed to maintain their optimism despite the pitfalls of aging. Wendy Lehr's choreography nicely complements the show's vaudevillian flair. □



The Geriatrical Theatrical. Photo by Keri Pickett



THEATER | John Townsend



Camino Real. Photo by Richard Fleischman

WHEN GAY MASTER PLAYWRIGHT TENNESSEE WILLIAMS WENT SURREAL – 'CAMINO REAL' THREW THE RULES OUT THE WINDOW

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-from *A Playwright with a Social Conscience* by Michael Paller

Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) was a genius at making realistic situations poetic and lyrical without writing in verse. His 1940s masterworks *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Summer and Smoke* probed issues like the suppression of one's true self and surviving in the face of economic and psychological cruelty in a way that most audience members could readily latch onto. Both *Streetcar* and *Smoke* shimmered with a unique erotic power that threatened puritanical sensibilities of the era but their superb charac-

Continued on page 22

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ter development and great stories ensured wide appreciation.

However, in 1953, Williams threw realism and dramatically structured storytelling out the the window with *Camino Real* (Spanish for Royal Road). Reviews were mixed. Some were severely negative. Its surrealistic vision of a fascist state countered by a wholesome All-American prizefighter made some equate it with the recent onslaught of the McCarthy era. Williams, who was familiar with Latin America first hand, would have been aware of Uncle Sam's nontransparent connections to tyrannical regimes there. And of course, his publicly known homosexuality had only to have sharpened the xenophobia the play was met with.

In *Camino Real* naive innocence comes into a terrible awareness of dark forces and undercurrents that exist in the world – a moral education for the common man. The student is a prizefighter named Kilroy, which was a nickname for a typical American soldier. GIs would write in graffiti during World War II: 'Kilroy was here.' The



Photo by Richard Fleischman

postwar plays of Williams, Arthur Miller, and William Inge, as well as Film Noir, often dealt vividly with men, primarily white, who could not adapt to the reconfigured post-World War II American society. Whether a veteran or not, it was the plight of many average white men of the time. Williams and Inge, both gay men, had a tender ineffable feeling for such men in ways that perhaps only a gay man can have. Heterosexual Miller and many Noir artists were certainly sympathetic, and often empathic, but in a different intangible way.

In Girl Friday Productions' revival Eric Knutson plays Kilroy. He describes the protagonist as "a washed up champion boxer with a bad heart that is the 'size of a baby.' Fearing death from one real hard kiss he leaves his one true woman, his wife, and works as a merchant marine until he picks up tropical fever on a rotten tub. This forces him off the boat and onto the Camino Real. Kilroy is a man trying to survive at any cost. It isn't until he is stripped of everything from his dignity as a man to his past glory that he realizes what is most important in life: waking up in the middle of the night and feeling the warmness of the one you love – the one you're used to and the who you know loves you."

Unfortunately, there's nothing royal or noble about the Camino Real. The name is ironic. Williams's setting is a no man's land dictatorship where people go when their luck or life's purpose has run out. The sense of time, history, fiction, and reality are all simultaneously suspended and intertwined. Iconic literary characters are transplanted into this military police state: Marguerite Gautier as *Camille* and as *The Lady of the Camellias* of Alexandre Dumas's novel, and central character of Verdi's opera, *La Traviata*; Marcel Proust's Baron de Charlus; the idealistic Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza originally penned by Miguel de Cervantes; Esmeralda, a gypsy from Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Additionally, there are towering figures from literary history: Lord Byron and Casanova whose romanticism and libido don't serve them well on the Camino. Dramaturg Christine 'Kit' Gordon explains their roles: "These down-at-heel visitors to the Camino remain privileged in some sense, while the town's inhabitants and street people struggle to survive. Into this mix, Williams brings Kilroy, a quintessential open-minded and golden-hearted American, who must confront both western history and developing nation stress in his time on the Camino. The play reflects Williams's own concerns when it was written in 1953, but the questions he raises about power, love, and sacrifice remain critically relevant in the 21st century. By bringing together history and fiction to play with and against one another, Williams articulates the many-leveled nature of our lives, not only informed by who we are and what we know but also by what we dream."

Two other icons the playwright injects were originally penned by Dumas. Kimberly Richardson plays Prudence and Sally Ann Wright plays Olympe. Richardson observes, "Prudence is an older lady who sponges off her younger, more successful friends. Olympe is a courtesan like Camille, who is jealous of Camille's beauty and success with men. Both are fair weather friends of Camille, and in the Garbo film both extort money from Camille when she is morally ill. I think in *Camino Real*, Olympe and Prudence have dead-ended together. They live together and carry on a friendship out of necessity. Their relationship is like the evil stepmother and evil stepsister stuck together at the end of a fairy tale, forever. Prudence has lost her mind and Olympe takes care of her, at least minimally. Prudence seems haunted by Camille's tragedy and her role in it But ultimately, like almost everyone on the Camino, she is out for herself."

Wright adds, "On the Camino Real there doesn't seem to be an abundance of true affection and the world of the courtesan was so dependent on physical beauty and wit. It must have been enormously competitive. With age, Olympe and Prudence have lost these essential qualities and don't know where to turn to next. Hence their presence on the Camino Real."

Director Ben McGovern says *Camino Real* "doesn't seem to follow any of the rules that you'd expect even the most ornery play to follow, and yet it manages to transmit a steady flow of images, stories, feeling, characters, philosophic proposals and comedic punchlines. The play is constantly shape-shifting and it feels as if the only constant is its reverence for mystery and questions without answers." □

Camino Real
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www.girlfridayproductions.org



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Whoever coined the phrase, "it's not the journey, it's the destination," could have been talking about the Great River Highway's sweeping vistas. Once you get beyond the flat side of St. Paul and cross the river into Wisconsin, the road begins to pitch and turn, winding through rolling hills where lazy milk cows graze. Herds of sheep munch grass as you whizz by. Diving down through the bluffs, giant birds of prey circle, hunting nearby by waterways. It's a stunning drive that it's almost enough to forget where you're going. That is until you see the red, black, and white sign beckoning, "Chef Shack."

Carrie Summers greeted us at the door. Half of the lovely couple who led the food truck charge into the Twin Cities and have since opened this spot with the exclusive summer hours. Her partner, Lisa Carlson, was ensconced in the small kitchen inside, whipping up all manner of delicious dishes.

Summer and Carlson first met back in 2001. Carlson was the

Continued on page 26

Beautiful bloodies with friends.
Photo by Stephanie A. Meyer

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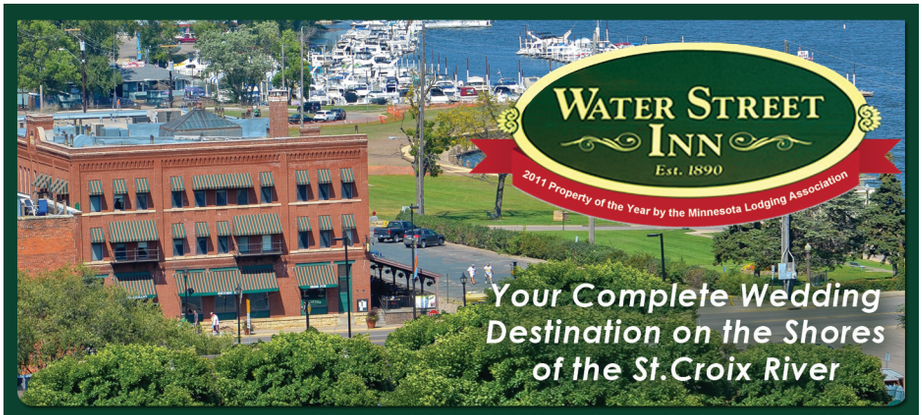
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(From top) A multitude of morels; Cutie charcuterie. Photos by Stephanie A. Meyer

opening chef at Café Barbette in Uptown. She hired Summer to be her *sous* chef. Little did they know how perfectly they would fit together. Carlson's food is approachable elegance with a focus on organic ingredients. Summer knows her way around an understated dessert, coaxing layers of flavor with judicious amounts of salt to balance the sweet. Anyone who has tasted those divine mini donuts from their food truck knows that.

What began as a professional relationship became personal. To watch the two work together is to see their unspoken understanding of each other's strengths; they simply complement each other beautifully. Thirteen years together have passed and they have hit their stride.

It was a long road from the Mill City Farmers Market, where they began as a stand called Urban Donut, to the trucks (they now have several), to all the way out to Bay City. They had long searched for a restaurant space to call their home. On the one hand, it had to have a kitchen space that could accommodate the trucks' needs, but it also had to have the right vibe for what Carlson calls "ranch rustic country French" cooking.



They very nearly had a different space, a little spot in the city that was almost home and then it didn't work out. That project scrapped, they had to begin again. A friend directed to them to a restaurant in Bay City, Wisconsin, about an hour outside of the metro area. The restaurant owners had been looking to sell their modest sized restaurant to someone who would take it to the next level. They would rather let it languish than sell to someone who wouldn't care for their customers and all they had built. After several meetings and yet more time, the couple decided that they could entrust what they had built to Summer and Carlson.

They gave the space an overhaul – which gave Summer the chance to dig into her antique collection (another passion of hers) to decorate the restaurant. The décor is accented with antique colored bottles. On one wall hangs a collection of sweet little mirrors. (She admits one belonged to an old girlfriend – who spotted it right away when she came to visit.)

The space is personal, comfortable, and beautiful, like being invited to a friend's cabin. It's just that those friends happen to be fabulous cooks with a full bar. (The bar, by the way, has some of the most comfortable barstools my fanny has ever had the pleasure of perching upon.)

They're only open on the weekends in the summer. We visited for brunch on a day full of golden sunlight. The backyard was set with extra seating. We could see the waves lapping against the shore in the distance.

Our brunch began with a selection of incredibly fresh oysters; lush, briny and very likely the



Continued on page 28

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best oyster I've had the pleasure of tasting in recent memory. We paired them with bloody Marys, swimming with shreds of horseradish, garnished with a little hunk of dilly cheese that walked that line between drink and meal.

The charcuterie plate was a selection of cured meat, salmon, local cheese (this being the dairy state), and a few of their perky little pickles. Each dish was respectful of the raw materials, reveling in the fleeting seasons.

Eggs were gently scrambled and positively brimming with morels of the moment, set atop softly cooked greens: astoundingly simple, yet so wonderfully rich in flavor.

A walleye sandwich banished all memories of disappointing fish fries that came before it. A thin crunchy shell yields easily to the tooth, revealing a fat hunk of ultra-moist fish, full of pristine lake flavor, topped with a little dollop of their tartar sauce and one, solitary pickled ramp. All this was framed like a great piece of art by a soft, puffy bun.

And then, because it was Sunday and because I wasn't driving, we decided to sample their house-made limoncello, served in a collection of vintage glasses. A decision I could never regret.

Chef Shack Bay City is not only worth the drive, it might be worth planning a road trip around. In this case, it's the destination. □

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(From top) Oysters so fresh you can hear the ocean; Limoncello in flight. Photos by Stephanie A. Meyer

NEWSY BITS

Wine bars abound. Broders opened their new spot **Terzo** just across the street from their pasta bar and French Meadow has opened **Bluestem** adjacent their Hennepin Avenue location.
The Buttered Tin is now up and running in St. Paul's Lowertown. Serving breakfast, lunch, as well as beer and wine, it's likely to be a new neighborhood gathering spot.
Marin is opening their doors in downtown Minneapolis at the base of the Chambers hotel. The space has been completely redone by Shea, Inc., and will serve healthy, fresh food.

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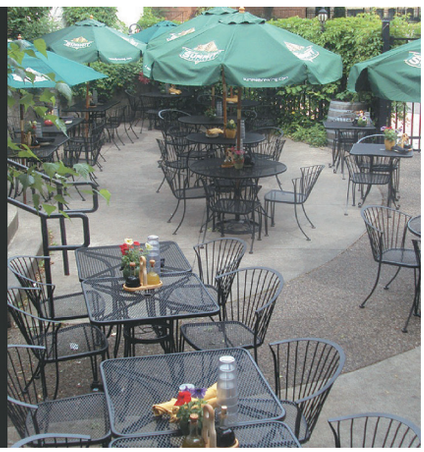
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Berlin, Germany. Photo courtesy of istockphoto

BERLIN, GERMANY

We're landing in Berlin: Fasten your seatbelts and set your watches ahead to—oh, 2020. Berlin, the capital of cool, is the city of tomorrow. "We are on an upstream," says Gabrielle, who's guiding me around the city: "We're always changing."

We're striding along the Ku' Dam, the chic shopping boulevard that make the Champs-Elysees look downright frumpy, ogling forward fashion bastions as Berlin marathoners storm by. From our nearby hotel, the uber-chic Intercontinental, I spy the miles-long Tiergarten, Berlin's 'green lung', anchored by the city's world-class zoo. Beyond it looms the iconic Brandenburg Gate, dividing West from East and once again the symbol of the united city.

During the era of Occupation, the Russians muscled control of the historic and cultural treasures clustered in their Eastern Zone. With those bleak decades over, today East Berlin has become the buzzing boho sector of the city, where Berlin's pulse races fastest and most of the "good stuff" is found—starting with Unter der Linden, the avenue of the arts, with the University (Einstein among its alums), the Opera House, the patrician Cathedral, and the treasures on Museum Island alongside the River Spree. Across the avenue stretches Alexanderplatz, anchored by the Russians' landmark TV Tower. It overlooks the city's oldest building—St. Nikolai Church of 1230, and its equally venerable counterpart, St. Mary's, with medieval frescoes depicting a jaunty red Devil leading the Dance of Death.

Life, not death, is celebrated 24/7 in the once-Jewish, working-class quarter called Prenzlauer Berg. Under the railway arches that divide it from its more proper neighbors, it's a magnet of all things hip: shops of vintage-wear, modern galleries, indie boutiques where you can snag a shocking-pink "safety belt" belt or handmade Nouveau kitchen tile, socks for your chair's legs, Scottie dog stereo speakers, bike seats as animal heads. The golden dome of the New Synagogue of 1805 still glitters, spared, on that chilling Kristellnacht that kicked off the Holocaust, by a brave precinct politico, today open to tour.

Aside the Spree, the DDR Museum recaptures life under Russian occupation—a Travi, the car of (no) choice—waiting list, 15 years; an orange-and-aqua apartment of the Sixties; omnipresent bugging devices and propaganda movies; shelves of banned books (called the "poison closet"); Soviet jeans side-by-side with black-market Levi's; approved music (60 percent of anything played must be produced by the DDR). And media: "39 newspapers, two TV channels, four radios stations…and one opinion."

Another somber sign of Occupied times are bits of the Wall and Checkpoint Charlie, where today a museum makes real the deadly no-man's-land between sectors of the city, and the daring

attempts at escape—via balloon, car trunk, even cramped into a dog carrier or suitcase. Even grimmer: the must-see Topography of Terror Museum, with photos and quotes from the Nazi reign of horror: humiliations, round-ups and detention camps, speeches by a "heiling" Hitler. Here stood the feared headquarters of the Storm Troopers and Gestapo. The Holocaust Memorial near the Brandenburg Gate pays respect via scores of somber, gray slabs. Close by lies Ground Zero: the site of Hitler's bunker.

This year, the stories of those reviled by The Fuhrer are told on pillars throughout the city memorializing "Destroyed Diversity"—the hounding of Jews, gays, artists, writers, teachers—anyone who didn't fit the mold. But today, it's a far happier story, as Berlin celebrates the energy that its "alternative" populations add to the city.

And the food? Forward, too—as in a firmament blinking with Michelin stars, including the Intercontinental's, evidenced in desserts like mango panna cotta and rotegruten (red berry) sorbet. With tables sprawling into the green Tiergarten, am neuen See treats slugabeds to breakfast until 3 p.m., where they can choose Berliners' favorite pizza, flammenkuchen, topped with cream cheese, ham and onions. For me, lovely local trout.

At Leibnitz Klaus, the hyper-local clientele hasn't changed for decades, and neither has the menu. I pigged out on an item rightly called "super pork hock"—served with kraut, boiled potatoes, horseradish and spicy mustard. Saner tablemates attempted meatballs of basketball girth, and wine-scented sauerbraten. Later, homemade apple strudel. And beer. Tuchovsky, since the Twenties a hangout for literary types, also produced plates Wagner's hefty heroines might envy: liver and onions, schnitzel, rouladen. More pork. More potatoes. And, of course, more beer.

Berlin is not only a wonderland, but—bonus!—an amazingly affordable city. And a welcoming one. The Pink Pillow Collection notes hotels (including the Intercontinental) that particularly cherish gay clients (www.pinkpillow-berlin.com). Visit www.patroc.com/berlin/gay-guide.de for everything from clubs to events, like June 22's Christopher Street Day. Check www.visitBerlin.com to plan your stay. More good news: Air Berlin has just launched state-of-the-art nonstop flights direct from Chicago (free everything, from alcohol to movies). So, what are you waiting for?

DRESDEN

Talk about Quality of Life: as the apex of architecture, art and music, Dresden—a two-hour train ride from Berlin—became known as "the Florence of the North" and "the balcony of Europe." Honoring those treasures, the Allies left it untouched—until the final hours of World War II in 1945. Then, it was carpet-bombed—not once, but three times in quick succession, to destroy Germany's last shreds of morale. The entire city lay in ruins.







(Clockwise from top left) The iconic TV tower landmark of Berlin's eastern (Russian) sector during the cold war; Baroque building in Dresden; Brandenburg Gate. Photos courtesy of stock.xchng

Today, it's once again a culture-maven's paradise—meticulously rebuilt to emulate its Baroque glory, a city of sculpted stucco and golden statues atop a sea of graceful domes. Folks once again stroll the expansive promenade along the River Elbe, where, in the dark days of Nazi rule, signs decreed "No Jews Allowed." The nearby synagogue was devastated on that infamous night in 1938. Today, however, a modern temple marks the spot—new, because "the old cannot be replaced as if it never happened," explains a guide, who points to the Star of David embedded in its façade. "A fireman found it in the ashes of the old temple and bravely hid it all during the war." Today, benches along the promenade are emblazoned with the message "Speak Up!" to underscore that this must never occur again.

Dresden's beloved Frauenkirche was shattered, too. The city's landmark church since the 17th century was rebuilt in 2005 with restored glory. Workers, clearing off the bombing's rubble, unearthed the ancient steeple cross, which shines anew.

Near it stretches the Jousting Court, where armored knights did combat. And that intricate, block-long mural? That's the Procession of Princes—a life-size parade of 800 years of rulers, composed in tiles of porcelain, for which the town is famous. Close by looms the elegant palace, erected by Augustus the Strong to one-up Versailles. Today, museums line its garden, climaxing in the famed Green Vault: eight chambers, all glittering gold and shining mirrors, housing Augustus's treasures of ivory, amber, silver, gold, and countless jewels.

Other once-royal edifices now hold more treasuries of art. The Old Master's Gallery boasts a who's who, from Rembrandt and Rubens to Durer's Dresden altar, and… what's this? Raphael's famed "Sistine Madonna" with those often-copied simpering cherubs, "borrowed" from under the Pope's nose. The Albertinum continues the roll call with modern works—Manet, Degas and Picasso sharing walls with Warhol and Pollack.

The Semper Opera House (home also to the orchestra and ballet) staged premieres by homeboys Richard, Wagner and Strauss. Our home was the contempo Innside Hotel, just a baton's throw away, where a meal of tuna tartare; coddled egg with pea puree, smoked eel jus and caviar; and Wagyu beef crowned Dresden as a dining Mecca, too. Hungry for more? Visit www.marketing.dresden.de. □



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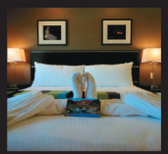
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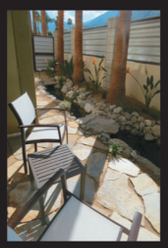
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A Guide to Pride Events at Bars & Restaurants

Here's a handy calendar of GLBT Pride events at Twin Cities community bars and restaurants from Thursday, June 27 to Sunday, June 30. For more information and updates, check out the websites and phone numbers listed.

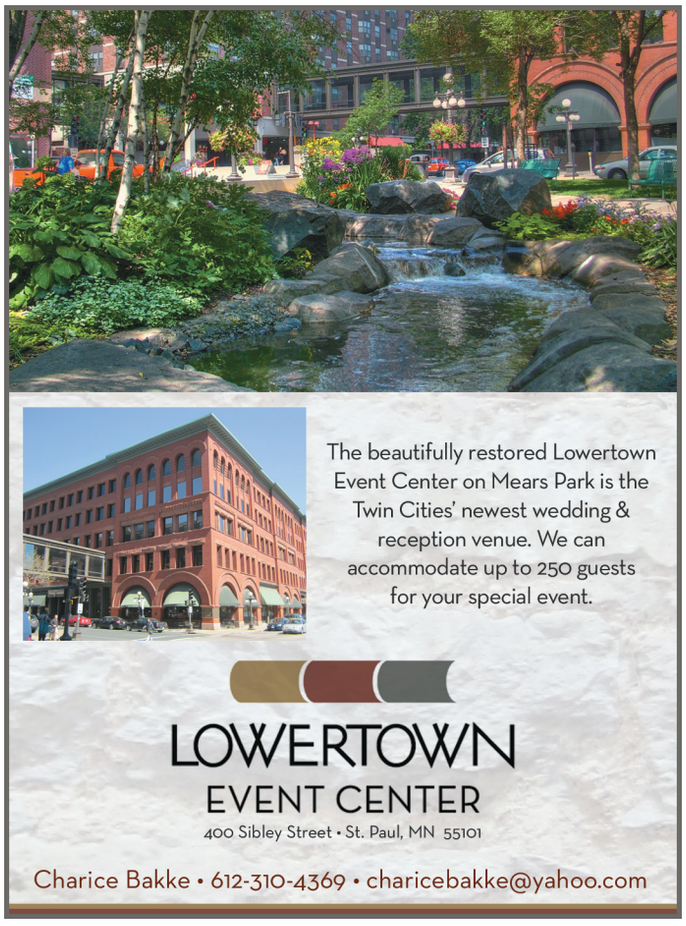
THURSDAY JUNE 27
Summer Time Luau Mini Ball Deluxe. Gay 90's.
Miss City of the Lakes Pageant. Gay 90's.
Berlin Pride Edition. Hell's Kitchen.
Fur Baller Softball Team Fundraiser. Lush.
4th Annual Transtastic Thursday. Town House.

FRIDAY JUNE 28
Pride Patio Party. 19 Bar.
Uptown Pride Block Party. Bryant Lake Bowl.
Scorch Fireball 14. EagleBOLTbar.
The Big Gay Pride Party. Epic Night Club.
Grown & Sexy Pride. First Avenue.
Pride Foam Party. Gay 90's.
Ultimate Pride Drag Show. Gay 90's.
Pride Fest. Loring Kitchen & Bar.
Blush Friday's Pride Block Party. Lush.
Roxxy Hall's Acoustic Showcase. Town House.

SATURDAY JUNE 29
Pride Patio Party. 19 Bar.
Pride BBQ & Signature Pride Cocktails. Café Maude.
Scorch Fireball 14 with COLT Model Bob Hager. EagleBOLTbar.
Booby Trap Pride. Epic Night Club.
Ultimate Pride Drag Show. Gay 90's
Pride Soul Friday White Party. Hell's Kitchen.
Pride Fest. Loring Kitchen & Bar.
Fire/Ice Dance Party. Lush.
Erin Schwab & Lori Dokken. Town House.

SUNDAY JUNE 30
Pride Patio Party. 19 Bar.
Pride BBQ & Signature Pride Cocktails. Café Maude at Loring.
Mia Dorr. Camp Bar.
Parade Viewing Party & Tea Dance. Crave.
Scorch Fireball 14. EagleBOLTbar.
Pride Eggs & Drag Breakfast Buffet. Gay 90's.

Continued on page 34





Ultimate Pride Drag Show. Gay 90's.
Pride Fest. Loring Kitchen & Bar.
Battle of the DJs. Lush.
Rise + Shine on 609 with United Way Arise Project. Rosa Mexicano.
Pride Block Party. Saloon.
Bitch-n-Brunch. Seven.
Lavender's Pride Central Parade Viewing Party. Union Rooftop.

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Camp Bar • 490 N. Robert St., St. Paul • (651) 292-1844 • www.camp-bar.net

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eagleBOLTbar • 515 Washington Ave. S., Mpls. • (612) 338-4214 • www.eagleBOLTbar.com

Epic Night Club • 110 N. 5th St., Mpls. • (612) 332-3742 • www.epicmpls.com

First Avenue • 701 N. 1st Ave., Mpls. • (612) 338-8388 • www.first-avenue.com

Gay 90's • 408 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 333-7755 • www.gay90s.com

Hell's Kitchen • 80 S. 9th St., Mpls. • (612) 332-4700 • www.hellskitcheninc.com

Loring Kitchen & Bar • 1359 Willow St., Mpls. • (612) 843-0400 • www.loringkitchen.com

Lush Food Bar • 990 Central Ave., Mpls. • www.lushfoodbar.com

Rosa Mexicano • 609 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 656-7144 • www.rosamexicano.com

Saloon • 830 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 332-0835 • www.saloonmn.com

Seven Sushi Ultraloung and Skybar • 700 Hennepin Ave., Mpls. • (612) 238-7770 • www.7mpls.com

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LEATHER LIFE | Steve Lenius

Knights of Leather Celebrate 25th-Anniversary Tournament

The Knights of Leather recently held their silver-anniversary Tournament 25 run. In keeping with this anniversary the theme of the run was, simply, "Silver."

The Knights Tournament run is modeled on medieval tournaments, a weekend of games, rituals, camaraderie, a formal banquet—and rustic, rough-hewn, candle-lit dungeons in the woods. This year's run was held the weekend of May 31-June 2 and was sold out, with more than 100 people in attendance. Those 100 people included representatives of 10 clubs, organizations, and groups. In addition to Minnesota, attendees came from



Photo by Steve Lenius

North Dakota, Iowa, Illinois and Texas.

Many members of another Twin Cities club, the Atons of Minneapolis, attended this year's Tournament as a show of support and solidarity with the Knights. The Atons, who last year celebrated their 40th anniversary, played a part years ago in helping the Knights of Leather form as a club.

Founded in 1985 in the Twin Cities as a club exclusively for leatherwomen, the Knights were reconstituted in 2000 as a pansexual leather club. Although there were clubs for leatherwomen on both coasts, The Knights of Leather was the first club for leatherwomen in the Midwest.

In attendance at Tournament 25 was PJ Knight, the club's first pledge (or "squire") and now the most senior member of the club. On Friday evening Knight hosted "Tournament 101," an orientation session and tour of the grounds for those who had never before attended Tournament. Later on Friday evening, the traditional ceremony of remembrance was held around the campfire.

On Saturday afternoon PJ Knight and your humble columnist were two members of a five-member panel sharing their memories concerning local and national leather history. In addition, available all weekend in the main lodge were notebooks, photo albums, and scrapbooks documenting the history of both the Knights of Leather and Minnesota's GLBT and leather communities.

Eight other educational seminars and workshops were presented on Saturday as well. Topics included switching, tops playing with tops, slave positions, pet play and "rope scenes for all."

In keeping with the weekend's "Silver" theme, both decor and guest attire for Saturday evening's formal banquet were filled with glittery, shiny, silvery, sparkly things. The pre-banquet cocktail hour was hosted by The Atons of Minneapolis.

So what comes after 25? Next year the Knights will present Tournament 26, the theme of which was announced during the Tournament 25 weekend as "Alphabet Soup: Kink from A to Z." For more information about Tournament 26 and the Knights of Leather, visit www.knightsofleather.com. □





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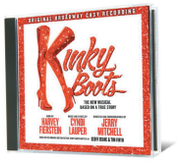


MUSIC | Ed Huyck



DAFT PUNK ***Random Access Memories***

So, since we last saw the be-helmeted Frenchmen in 2005, they managed to become the dance voice of a generation, unleashing the biggest seller of their career. *Random Access Memories* is as old school as the title, loaded with touches of funk, disco and other dance styles going back decades. They employ an intriguing selection of guests here, from Julian Casablancas of the Strokes to "Rainbow Connection" writer Paul Williams. Oh yeah, it's that kind of album through and through. Holding all of this together is an absolute celebration of the freedom dance music can bring to the soul, as the duo goes from rave up to rave up, celebrating generations of sweaty dance floors and promising to pack some more.



Kinky Boots

Unless the composer is someone like Stephen Sondheim, it's a bit awkward to listen to a cast album without having seen the show in question. *Kinky Boots* has received some mixed notices and 13 Tony Award nods this spring, so I'm sure it'll find itself on these shores sometime in the next couple of years. In the meantime, we have this prerelic, complete with a bevy of new Cyndi Lauper tunes (always exciting) and featuring vocals from the heavily lauded duo of Stark Sands and Billy Porter. The tunes are a lot of fun, with Lauper taking plenty of inspirations – from pop to dance to disco to 1950s-style rock 'n' roll – and pushes it all through her usual bright song craft, and that's enough for now.



HEAVY DEEDS ***Light Lunch***

The Heavy Deeds are a sort-of continuation of local psyche favorites Vampire Hands, with three members from that band (including Chris Bierden, also in Poliça). Added to the mix are two brand-new voices – Sara Bischoff and Molly Hilgenberg – and a collection of tunes that continue the vibe of the old band if not exactly the same guitar-driven sound. It's an ep that seems to have arrived from a long-ago time. These are heavy-duty grooves here, designed to capture the listener and bring them to a happy place. In fact, you want album-closer "The Great Believers" to go on forever and ever. Then there's the easy-going title track, which brings to mind some lost relic from 1972, unearthed for our listening pleasure.



SAVAGES ***Silence Yourself***

Stuttering, jittering post-punk never goes out of style. You can dance to it if you want, or bang your head to the heavy beat or just soak up the edgy, angry ambiance. London's Savages – incidentally, they're all ladies – are the latest to pick up the late 1970s mantel from the likes of Joy Division and Gang of Four. The band isn't a one-trick pony, either. Sure, they can bring the raging intensity on a tune like "Husbands" or cascades of noise on the pummeling "I Am Here," but there is also a side willing to explore darker and moodier sounds. Album-closer "Marshal Dear" is built around a wild clarinet solo from Duke Garwood that sends the listener off into the dark and stormy night. □

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BIG GAY NEWS

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Mitch Anderson, Gay Texas Teen, Comes Out In Graduation Speech

The *Huffington Post* reports that a Texas teen is being praised after coming out as gay in an emotional graduation speech. Mitch Anderson, the salutatorian of the 2013 Belton High School class in Belton, Texas, described in his speech how he had been bullied, made to feel worthless and eventually contemplated suicide. Anderson, who had not even come out to his parents before the speech, notes that reaction to his news has been positive and supportive.

Republican Pushes "License To Bully" Gay And Lesbian Service Members

The Raw Story reports that a measure included in an annual defense spending bill on Wednesday night could make it harder for the U.S. military to protect gay and lesbian service members from religious bullying. Representative John Fleming of Louisiana proposed the amendment, saying that it would help to protect the religious liberties of service members. However, many worry that it would serve to increase bullying, harassment and discrimination against GLBT servicemen and women under the guise of religious freedom.

Christians Can't Drink Starbucks Because Company Supports Gay Marriage, Evangelical Says

The *Huffington Post* reports that coffee-drinking Christians should take note – there's apparently "no way" a truly righteous Christian can drink Starbucks beverages. According to conservative activist and former evangelical pastor David Barton, no true Christian should contribute to Starbucks' support of same-sex marriage and thus its subsequent destruction of traditional marriage by purchasing their products. Barton told congregants at Whitesburg Baptist Church "there's no way a Christian can help support what is attacking God. I'm sorry, you've got to find some other coffee to drink. You can't drink Starbucks and be Biblically correct on this thing. It's just a real simple principle."

Pennsylvania School Graduation Won't Use Transgender Name

Fox News reports that a central Pennsylvania school district has refused to allow a transgender student's male name to be announced during his graduation ceremony later this week. Red Lion Area School District will allow Isaak Wolfe to wear the black graduation gown designated for male students, but stated that since a diploma is a legal document, he will have to be called by his current female name of Sierra Stambaugh as he walks across the stage to receive it. Wolfe is working on changing his name legally, but the process will not be completed by his graduation.

Wausau's First Gay Pride Parade Faces Backlash

The *Milwaukee Wisconsin Journal Sentinel* reports that Wausau's plans to host its first gay pride parade are sparking complaints from a conservative family group, as well as at least one city alderman. Daxx Bouvier, the parade organizer, has said that the celebration is long overdue, especially with the number of GLBT people residing in the area. Although the city committee approved the permit for the event, a group called Wisconsin Family Voice, along with Wausau city alderman David Nutting, has expressed disapproval in regards to it going ahead.

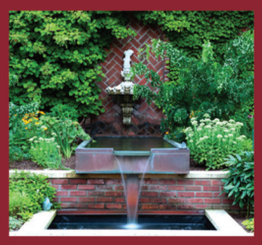
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by Kathleen Watson



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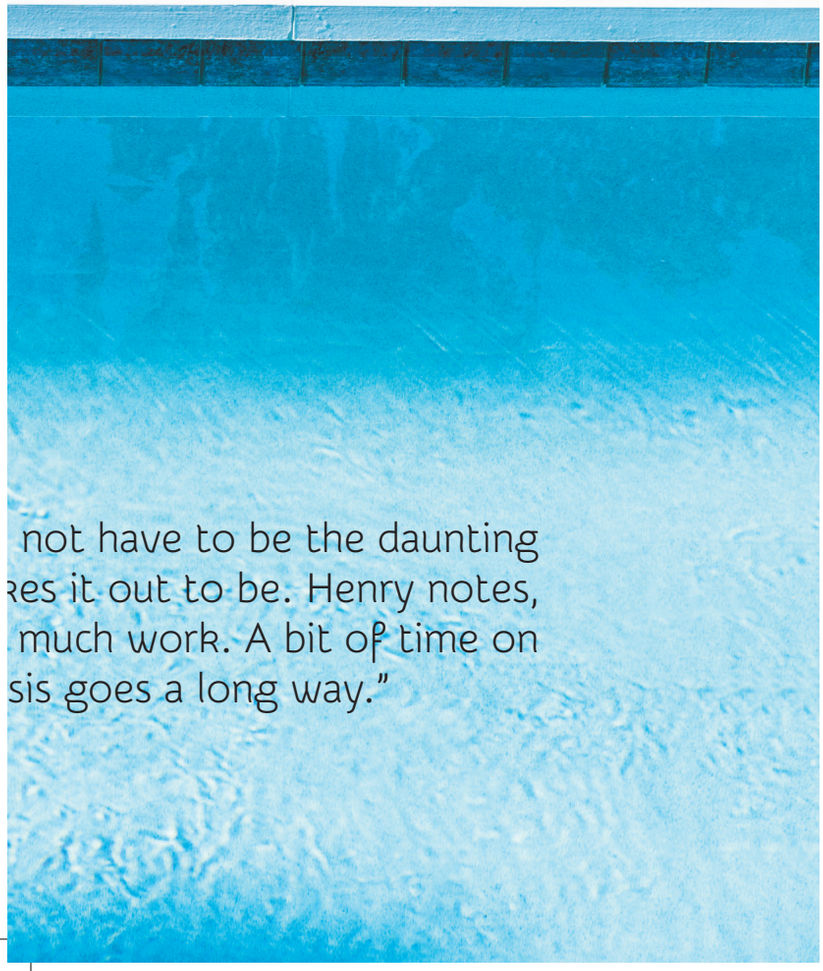
Ah, the backyard. Home to patios, gardens, and pools. Home to intimate nights with close friends, family barbecues, and coffee at daybreak. Sounds like heaven, right? Too often, though, the backyard becomes a dreaded beast—full of troublesome spots that only cultivate weeds, shabby patios that simply serve their purpose, or so little privacy that you're better off inside. Unlike a front garden, the backyard is meant to be a sanctuary, a deliberately relaxing extension of your home. Fortunately, it's simple to turn an abysmal backyard into a garden fit for kings with a bit of inspiration, a touch of professional design, and a whole lot of fun.

Imagine slipping out the back door and into your own private oasis. There's no need to fight the crowds at the lake or community pool when you can dip your feet into your own crystal-clear pool. Owning a pool is an easily attainable luxury, and the enjoyment it brings is worth every penny. Even the construction process can be hassle-free, especially with the help of Prestige Pools (www.prestigepools.com).

Since 1981, Pat Henry and his dedicated staff at Prestige have been creating unforgettable pools for homeowners across the Metro. Prestige is willing to help with every step of the process from the initial design to the construction and maintenance of pools and deck areas. Henry notes that his staff "will do as much or as little of the entire job as you like… When it comes to the actual construction of the pool, we even







have our own crew that does the building!"

Prestige Pools makes the design process simple and fun. Henry and his staff will visit the potential backyard and evaluate the possibilities. Henry encourages clients to imagine their dream pool and find pictures of similar ideas. He adds, "Do some diligent research. It's worth it." Henry incorporates the custom ideas of the client into a design that is both functional and unique, adding, "They're the ones writing the check. I want them to like what they're looking at."

Pool maintenance does not have to be the daunting task that everyone makes it out to be. Henry notes, "They really aren't that much work. A bit of time on a consistent basis goes a long way." If your lifestyle is too busy to do the maintenance yourself—or if you would rather leave the maintenance up to the professionals—Prestige Pools even has a weekly maintenance service to keep pools in pristine condition. Henry adds, "People who use that service are pretty pleased. They can just open up their pool and use it right away."

Pools can also be a great investment for a home, contrary to popular belief. Henry says, "If your home is valued at a couple hundred thousand dollars, you'll get beat up. If you're in the million-dollar range, it's absolutely an asset. If you're in between the two, and have some disposable income, it's a form of entertainment." Henry suggests that people with a higher disposable income consider pools to be the same investment as a snowmobile, a boat, or a camper. Though you may only be able to use the pool for five months, the experience and entertainment a pool provides makes a custom pool a worthy investment.

If you dream of relaxing in water all year round, consider the addition of an outdoor spa (commonly known as a hot tub). Premier Pool and Spa (www.premierpools.com) carries a line of spas specifically designed to function flawlessly through the Minnesota winters. Arctic Spas are above-ground spas made in Canada, and they can withstand even the coldest of temperatures. Pam Dionne, Marketer at Premier Pool and Spa, adds that efficiency in winter is key. "All our spas have 'forever' floors, meaning you don't have to lay down a cement pad. Additionally, the spa covers are designed to not fill with water over time, making the spas very efficient."

Dionne suggests that homeowners consider several factors when planning to add a spa. "The first thing we ask is why people want a spa. How many people will use it? Where do you want it? Are there any privacy concerns?" From there, the Premier Pool and Spa team will help clients decide if a therapeutic spa or swim spa is the best option and where it should be placed in the existing yard. These spa units are freestanding and self-contained, so they are easy to install within an existing yard design. Dionne adds that custom decking is also available in order to complete the space.

The cost of operating a spa year-round is surprisingly low. Dionne states, "In 20 degree weather, electricity costs about $20 a month to run. When it comes to chemicals, as long as you keep your tub balanced, you'll be looking at an additional $100 per six months." Premier Pool and Spa even offers classes for potential and current pool and spa owners in order to learn how to best maintain a clean, balanced pool.

An outdoor spa can be both therapeutic and a great place to entertain guests. Dionne says, "We are doing some great research with our spas and water therapy…just the heat itself makes your joints feel better. You're able to move better than when you're cold. That therapy is wonderful for athletes or people recovering from injuries, even people who are aging. For people who entertain, it's a great way to sit down and relax



Photo by Hubert Bonnet

with friends. It's inexpensive, fun, and intimate. It's a much nicer way to really get to know your friends."

When considering the addition of a pool or spa, it's important to remember that the same amount of time—if not more—will be spent around the water. Recent design trends include outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, and pergolas on the deck area. These elements make the outdoor area seem like an extension of the house instead of simply being what Pat Henry calls "a hole full of water." Additional kitchen areas or fireplaces also allow homeowners to use the outdoor area during the fall and early spring, making the pool or spa area a habitable space for more than just the summer. Ben Kidd, owner of Stoneman Masonry, says, "We're getting a lot more requests for outdoor living spaces. When we have a nice Minnesota summer, people really want to get out and enjoy it."

Ben Kidd, owner of Stoneman Masonry (www.stonemanmasonryinc.com), along with his business partner Dan Carriere, strive to create unique outdoor spaces that reflect their clients' needs and styles. Inspired by an education in art and art history, Kidd turned his college landscaping job into a full-time career when he purchased Stoneman Masonry in 2006. Since then, Kidd and Carriere have been transforming ordinary backyards into relaxing and functional spaces, allowing homeowners to get the most out of their outdoor spaces.

One particularly popular concept for outdoor areas is the addition of an outdoor kitchen. New outdoor kitchens contain much more than a simple grill and some patio chairs, and they make pool-side suppers fun and fabulous. Kidd encourages people to be creative when planning an outdoor kitchen. Built-in grills, drawer warmers, outdoor sinks, refrigerators, extra storage, bar counters, and even granite counter tops make grilling out even more enjoyable. In addition to food preparation areas, outdoor fireplaces make areas cozy and warm during cool nights. The spaces are functional and unique, two things that Stoneman Masonry are known for. Kidd adds, "If someone wants something really creative and outside the box…anything that's challenging or needs some problem-solving is what we specialize in."

Continued on page 44



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A raised stone patio, sitting walls, and a pergola offer areas for entertaining guests. Arches and water features give the area a Tuscan feel, and an outdoor fireplace makes the space warm and welcoming.

If the luxury of an outdoor kitchen or fireplace isn't in your budget, there are other ways to make pool-side areas more comfortable and useful. A simple solution is to add a pergola. Kidd states, "A pergola, especially if it's attached to the house, really makes the outdoor space feel like an extension of the house. It will give you a bit of shade while making you feel like you're still in a structure." Sitting walls also extend and frame the space while adding comfortable seating. Kidd notes, "The more features you have, the closer you get to having an area that's for four seasons. We have a lot of creative ways to make it at least a three-season area. You can use the spaces in the early spring and late fall, extending the Minnesota summer a bit."

Stoneman Masonry takes particular pride in a recent project where a client wanted them to create an Italian-inspired backyard. A raised stone patio, sitting walls, and a pergola offer areas for entertaining guests. Arches and water features give the area a Tuscan feel, and an outdoor fireplace makes the space warm and welcoming. Kidd says the cobblestones they used on the patio were replicated from a Holland street, evoking an "Old-World" feel. The client proudly calls her backyard the "Taste of Tuscany."

Though homeowners may be daunted by the task of making their outdoor dreams become reality, Kidd and Carriere make the design process simple and efficient. An initial meeting allows them to determine what the client has in mind and see any inspiration that a client brings to the table. The second meeting then focuses on presenting the design and suggesting materials and budget. Kidd notes that typical project budgets start around $8,000 for masonry and hardscaping. "Keep in mind that masonry and hardscaping are an investment in a property, and it should cost a bit more." Once the details are finalized and the timeline is established, Stoneman Masonry is ready to begin the project. Though the actual construction time varies according to the size and style of the project, clients find the process easy and enjoyable.

When it comes to choosing materials a patio area, Kidd stresses the importance of continuity. "We want to use materials that complement the house. Color choice is the most important thing when planning a patio." Kidd also notes the importance of choosing the correct materials for immediately around a pool. "You want to choose something lighter in color because it will be easier on bare feet." Also, pay particular attention to drainage, and use permeable materials like EcoGrout between stone joints. Paying attention to small details like these greatly improves the quality of the work and allows clients to enjoy their spaces for years to come.

Even with all the luxurious amenities new patio designs have to offer, the most beautiful and harmonious elements sometimes come from nature. Natural stone and lush green plants bring a bit of the "Great Outdoors" to your doorstep. Inspired by countless trips to the Boundary Waters, Jim Hansen, owner of Natural Landscape Minnesota, Inc. (www.naturallandscapemn.com), works with natural stone

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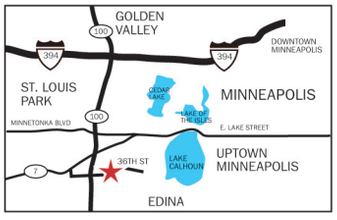




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and other natural elements to create unique sculptures and water features for gardens. Hansen says, "To me, a garden is not a garden without other elements in it."

Natural elements can add both practical and aesthetic dimensions to outdoor designs, particularly around pools. Hansen notes, "One issue with pools is that people love sun, but the sun is hard on your body. Add trees for shade, beauty, and integration." Though falling leaves may require more pool maintenance, proper placement of trees can minimize the amount of leaves shed into the pool. Hansen also suggests that homeowners plan for other focal points (such as gardens, custom stone benches, artwork, and water features) around the pool in order to keep the area interesting during seasons when the pool isn't in use. He adds, "A water feature is a great focal point; it's beautiful and pretty even in winter. A pool is a focal point with function, but it isn't attractive all year round." A water feature also adds relaxing water sounds which "soften a pool and make it more comfortable during the times of year when the pool isn't in use."

An increasingly popular style of water feature is the pond-free water feature. This feature utilizes running water for relaxing sound effects and eye-catching movement while minimizing the draw of mosquitoes to any standing water. The water recirculates through the feature using a pump system, allowing the feature to efficiently reuse as much water as possible. A water feature's efficiency makes it a great addition to a garden or pool-side area. Hansen adds, "Since the water itself will recirculate, you're only going to see a minimal change to your water bill. The amount of water that you'll use will be based on the size of the water feature, but more importantly, the exposure of the feature to sun and wind."

In addition to being beautiful, water features have practical benefits, such as providing privacy and blocking noise. Hansen recalls a recent project in Inver Grove Heights where the homeowner lived on a corner lot of two busy streets. The noise of traffic and the lack of privacy prevented the backyard from being the relaxing and intimate space the homeowner desired. Hansen's solution to the problem was to create a

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running water feature out of a 6,000 pound boulder. The water flows over 35 feet of rocks and small drops, causing the water to gurgle and flow. Hansen then added a traditional patio and a yoga patio which he connected with a small bridge. Hansen notes, "Each time the water drops or goes over the rocks, it creates a natural sound of water. Whenever you're around on those patios, the sound of the running water drowns out the noise from the street."

Hansen suggests that people begin their design plans by visiting the incredible public gardens around Minnesota. The Como Zoo, the rock garden at Lake Harriet, and the University of Minnesota's Landscape Arboretum are great sources of inspiration. He encourages people to take notes and pictures of natural elements that they enjoy. "That's how you end up with a garden that feels like your garden. It needs to reflect the individual's personality. You need to do something that's unique and special to you because that's when you have a passion for it. If you put a bit of research into the project, you'll end up with a more custom project that reflects you instead of the designer."

Once homeowners have done a bit of inspirational research, Hansen suggests doing some research on landscaping companies to determine the quality of work that will be done. He cautions, "The landscaping business is something that's very easy to get into, so we end up with a lot of people who shouldn't really be in the business. The work I did when I began 35 years ago doesn't compare to the quality of work I do today. Our business has six men who raise families and make a living by doing landscaping work. We're professional and passionate." This passion fosters unique, custom projects and a quality of work that speaks for itself.

Finally, Hansen encourages homeowners to get excited about the maintenance of their gardens. He says, "People tend to not maintain things because they don't know what to do. Well, attempting to maintain things is better than ignoring things. Try to learn a bit about maintenance. It's all experiment." Taking ownership and pride in your outdoor spaces will keep them looking fresh and welcoming, ensuring that your private oasis will be your favorite summer destination for years to come. □

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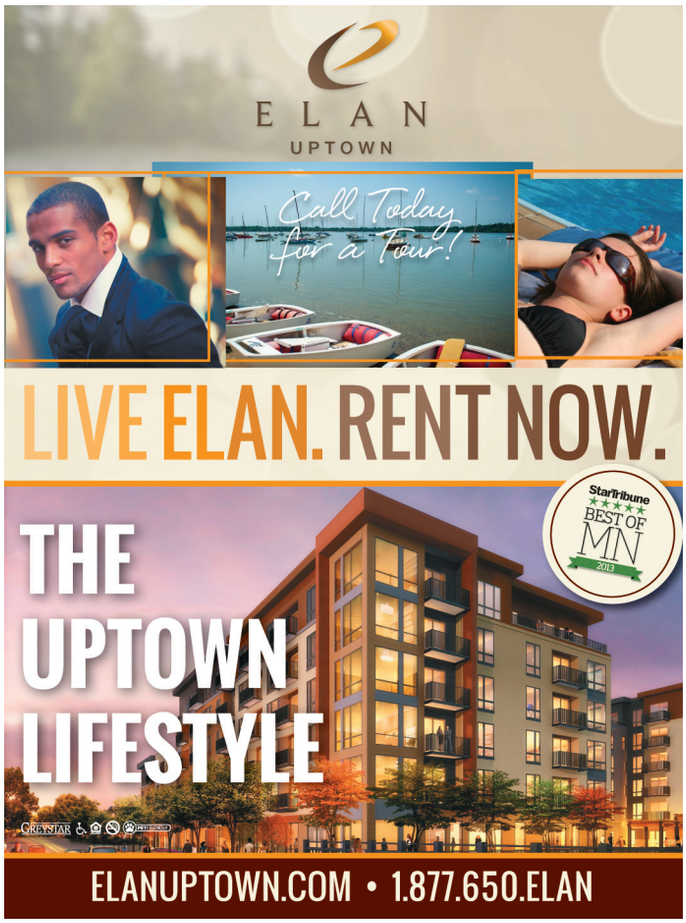












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A walk through the garden enjoying works of art is no longer an act set aside for the wealthy. Thanks to Tangletown Gardens' ninth annual garden and art tour, this experience is open to the general public. Attendants will enjoy a self-guided tour featuring contemporary and traditional art by dozens of the area's finest artists installed for the day in private Twin Cities gardens.

This year's theme presents nature and garden-themed works in the private gardens along neighborhoods bordering St. Paul and Minneapolis. Tangletown Gardens owner Scott Endres says to expect the unexpected throughout these "outdoor galleries," integrating paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, ceramics, and sculpture into the natural setting of each garden. For the inquiring minds, the artists and gardeners will be stationed at each site, ready to answer questions and discuss their work.

Attendants can enjoy complimentary coffee and refreshments from the Wise Acre Eatery before kicking off their tour. All proceeds from ticket sales and the sale of art work go to support public garden and art projects and partnerships throughout the Twin Cities. Past tours have funded the likes of horticulture scholarships and sculpture restorations. Endres and co-owner Dean Engelmann hope that these public gifts will serve as inspiration to many in the years to come.



Photo by Mike Hnida

Tickets for the July 27 affair are $25 in advance, $30 the day of the tour and are available through July 23 at Tangletown Gardens, Gallery 360, and Grand Hand Gallery. Tour maps can be picked up the day of the event at Tangletown Gardens. The gardens will be open from 9am to 4pm while the Garden Center will be open from 9am to 6pm. For further inspiration and information, visit the Tangletown Gardens website at www.tangletowngardens.com. □

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Photos by Randy Stern

CHRYSLER 200

When something comes along that represents good value, you purchase it – right?

Consider what is a good value these days. The basic idea is to get more for your money. In the automotive business, that means putting on more equipment at a competitive price. It all comes down to a package that suits the average consumer's needs with enough incentives toward eventual ownership.

However, being a good value alone is not enough. It has to be attractive to the consumer. It has to be comfortable and easy to operate. It has to have a story behind it.

In this case, there is a story for the consumer. If you recall a three Super Bowls ago, the Chrysler 200 took center stage as part of the new Chrysler brand marketing strategy – one that focused on the brand's roots and the air of luxury it exudes. Add Eminem and a choir to the mix, and the winged badge was set to fly. The result was an amazing turnaround for Chrysler's mid-sized product. What was once the Sebring – a product that some would use in a derogatory manner these days – transformed into an affordable, but premium family transport both seen at the rental car counter and in as many driveways across the country. Both volume and retail sales of the 200 have been the story of a car once maligned, now given a new lease on life.

But, is today's Chrysler 200 enough to engage every day consumers?

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One thing must be made clear here: The 200´s history was already checkered before Eminem rolled one up to the Fox Theater in Detroit. It began life as the Sebring with hopes of continuing the success of Chrysler's mid-sized lines from the 1990s. The Crossfire-inspired styling was a bit over the top and consumers found many faults with the Sebring. To reverse the tide, Chrysler went to work on upgrading the Sebring into the 200 by raising interior quality, cleaning up the design and improving driving dynamics.

The exterior is now more distinctive, with its winged badge, distinctive chrome grille texture, reconfigured rear deck, and a better choice of wheels. The front lights are fantastic, with a running LED strip on each side and projector lenses. Chrysler did leave the roof-line alone, but gussied it up with distinctive touches.

On this Touring model, something else was added to the mix. If you look at the back of the car, you will see an S badge. You may have heard that Chrysler has been adding a bit of sport to their model mix replete with blacked out grills, embroidered leather seating, larger wheels and the winged badge insert turning from Chrysler Blue to black. The 200 S has proved popular for enthusiasts – in both sedan and convertible models.

However, this S is not the real deal. On the Touring model, you can tick off an appearance package that looks like an S. It actually fooled plenty of people to know that this S is not the hopped up 200 everyone is talking about. Still, it looks pretty darn good – for a 200 Touring.

There are some dead giveaways for it being just an exterior package. Inside is the basic black Touring interior in cloth and with specific S instrument dial set. The biggest improvement from the Sebring to the 200 is right in front of the driver – with better materials and instrumentation. One complaint everyone had with the Sebring was the sight lines for all of the instrumentation That problem is resolved with better steering wheel diameter, thickness and positioning. It also helped to ensure that you can see the gas gauge easier toward the center dial.

The center stack is dramatic, starting with the white-faced and chrome Chrysler analog clock, leading down to the touch screen audio system and climate control knobs. The shifter has a better feel, as does almost every surface of the cabin. Though it did not come with navigation or a rear-view camera, you still get USB device connectivity and Bluetooth connection for your phone – all through UConnect. SiriusXM is available along with a 40GB hard drive to load your favorite songs and albums onto – all piped through six speakers throughout the cabin.

Seat comfort is not bad. You get manual lumbar adjustment along with power seat controls. The bolstering is minimal, but the seats do put you in place once it gets to know you. Room up front is good, and overall rear seat room is about right for an average-sized adult.

The other dead giveaway that it is not a "true" S is under the hood. Chrysler offers the 2.4litre four-cylinder World Engine under this model's hood. This tried-and-true motor sends 173 horses to its front wheels though a six-speed automatic transmission. It does a good job keeping up with traffic and getting around town. You will feel some loss in power on passing and some uphill grades. Still, this engine is not a bad choice, though some of my Mopar friends would persuade you to upgrade to the 3.6litre Pentastar V6. That is truly the engine to get in the 200 with 283 horsepower, the same six-speed automatic gearbox and all of the power right from your right foot.

Even with the four-cylinder engine, the 200 is actually quite fun to drive. The ride is very smooth and road imperfections were absorbed without shock into the cabin. Through the curves, the 200 is poised, neither soft nor firm. You can feel a bit of lean and roll, but not enough to cause concern. You can thank that to some suspension re-engineering for the 2013 model year. Steering was competent with enough feedback from the road, but a tad less sharp on tight turns. Brakes were very good with great reaction on normal and panic stops. In all, the 200 was great fun to trek between car events and the day job.

The surprise in the 200 with the four-cylinder was in fuel economy. The average consumption rating was 24.4MPG, lower than its direct rivals. You could achieve higher numbers on long stretches of highway – the highest reading was 30.2MPG.

However, the 200 is the best bargain in its class. The LX starts off at $20,190. This Touring with the S exterior appearance package came to $24,480. If you really want the S, upgrade to the Pentastar V6 in the Touring – another $400 to your bill, so far. Better still, jump to the Limited with everything the S offers for $28,810. That is the most you will pay for a Chrysler 200 – a good value, indeed.

Is the story of the Chrysler 200 enough to own one? Good question. It is not the perfect mid-sized sedan, but it is a fun car to drive. It is no longer the bane of rental fleets, but something we can actually buy without embarrassment. The S package sweetens the deal by creating something sporty to roll in, even if you did not tick off all of the boxes for a full-on version of one.

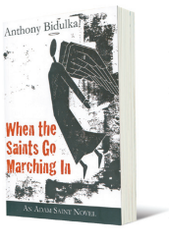
Even if you did pony up for the full S package, the price for one is pretty good compared to other loaded mid-sized models in the marketplace. That is what a good value is truly all about! □







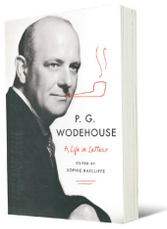
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Bidulka, of Russell Quant fame, has created a new series and dashing hero. Heroes: The title's plural reflects more than the iconic jazz tune. Adam Saint lives the high life of a Canadian Disaster Recovery Agent, deployed worldwide to any disaster involving a Canadian national. He's reveled in wads of money, cars, and blond good looks. But suddenly, his wife serves divorce papers, a friend is killed in an "accident," and he's diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. An expert at ratcheting up his novels' pace and suspense, Bidulka mixes in a multi-villain chase for a hidden cancer cure, and Adam's eccentric and eclectic family (Saints) jumps in to help. Unlike Quant, Saint is not gay–but what about Dad and his new best friend?



P.G. WODEHOUSE: A LIFE IN LETTERS

Ed. Sophie Ratcliffe
W.W. Norton
$35

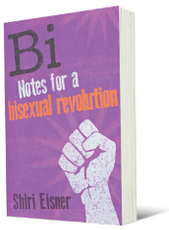
While P.G. Wodehouse was prolifically published by the time he was twenty-three, from earliest years he was also an inveterate letter writer–to school chums and many of the great personalities of the time, including Sir Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Evelyn Waugh, and George and Ira Gershwin, with whom PGW collaborated. Readers primarily acquainted with Bertie Wooster, Jeeves, Psmith and Ukridge will revel in this epistolary treasury from the Master, who through setbacks and war kept his sunny disposition within his own special world. In 1946 he wrote, "My stuff has been out of date since 1914, and nobody seems to mind." Editor Ratcliffe has done a yeoman's job of gathering, sifting, and preparing this enormous mass of matter into a splendid, easily navigable volume.



THE MARRYING KIND?: DEBATING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE WITHIN THE LESBIAN AND GAY MOVEMENT

Mary Bernstein and Vera Taylor
University of Minnesota Press
$25

Same-sex marriage is now legal in Minnesota and eleven other states, but the rejoicing is something less than universal. Many of the basic concerns involve fear of assimilation and the loss of queer identity and community, while others are more complex. *The Marrying Kind*? discusses these concerns in eleven essays under four topics–"Marital Discord," "Marriage-Equality Opposition," "Marriage Activism," and "The Impact of the Marriage-Equality Movement." A unique aspect of the debate is while there are straight opponents of same-sex marriage, the issue is a highly controversial one for many gays and lesbians as well. These essays work to present the arguments and to explore, through empirical research, the justification for GLBT opponents' fears, and the possible impact of the disagreements on the marriage-equality movement.



BI: NOTES FOR A BISEXUAL REVOLUTION

Shiri Eisner
Seal Press
$16

Shiri Eisner is a feminist bisexual and genderqueer activist, writer, and researcher. Working from feminist, transgender, and queer theory, Eisner presents Bi as a radical manifesto for the group commonly called "bisexual." I use those quotes because Eisner herself states up front, "I have no idea what bisexuality means." Like so many terms that are reduced to black and white, either/or, bisexuality is a far more complex entity. Both "homosexual" and "bisexual" emerged as terms around the end of the nineteenth century and in similar fashion both were used to categorize and pathologize. Starting from ground zero, Eisner explores and defines, always with an eye to being radical rather than liberal–one of the many fine and well-honed distinctions she makes in this seminal book. □







Human to Human

The band was belting out Queen's *Under Pressure.* I was standing—no, make that rocking hard with fist jabbing—at Ecolab Plaza in Saint Paul taking in the other four or five thousand celebrants two hours after Governor Dayton made GLBT marriage legal.

I had biked from downtown Minneapolis to avoid traffic and to get some exercise. Black and pink sweaty spandex covered me, but no one cared.

In between fist jabs, I looked out over the crowd. I saw square-shaped dykes kissing, wispy tee-shirted men hand-holding, cute twenty-something lesbians giggling, and an old guy—maybe seventy at least—waving a rainbow flag.

The mood was ecstatic, the scene historic. And the memory, unforgettable.

Then it hit me.

This is my tribe.

One of my life goals (ah, that would be in my life as Ellie Krug) is to connect humanity, what I call "human to human contact." I believe that when we understand how much we have in common, great things will happen.

Like marriage equality.

When I was a dude, I resided in an entirely different world. It was white, straight, fairly Republican (gasp), and regimented. At cocktail hour with those people, the subject de jour might be the latest addition to the country club's menu or that wonderful secret getaway in Wine Country.

That was one BMW and three Jeep Cherokees ago.

I now drive a Honda.

"Those people" (isn't it quite nice to see the phrase turned around?) never ignited me.

On the other hand, who can't get excited by purple hair? Or full body tattoos? Or six visible piercings?

Now that's my people.

And cute gay boys? Oh my god. Talk about honesty, sexuality, and style. Not to mention a couple of men who'd walk over flaming coals to rescue me.

They, too, are my people.

How did I defect? Why did I give up the straight majority?

For one, I had no choice. For two, I was *never* straight.

I just lied. To myself. To my soul mate. To the world.

And what do I think of GLBT people as a whole?

We are the most human people I know. When I speak to GLBT groups, my standard opening line is, "I've come home."

That's because we really are "family."

Many of us have one thing in common—we've struggled with identity and accepting who we are. We've disappointed others, lost people, and had moments where the nothingness of death seemed like a viable alternative.

In other words, we're survivors.

I like that about us. I *cherish* the bond. We are one for all and that other mucky emotional stuff we crave as human beings.

So back to Ecolab Plaza on Marriage Equality Day. The rock music echoed across several blocks, making my ears ache and my spirit soar. As the sun began to pinch the horizon, I headed home.

I rode past the Cathedral of Saint Paul and wondered how the Bishop felt on that historic day, one that the Catholic Church inadvertently engineered by pushing for the anti-marriage amendment last year.

How ironic. And how incredibly sweet such irony tastes.

I pumped and glided all the way home—down Marshall Ave, over the Lake Street Bridge, and along West River Parkway until I crested the hill just south of the Guthrie Theatre.

That's when I saw them.

Rainbows.

The Guthrie's smokestacks ordinarily display titles of current productions. On this night, however, GLBT rainbow colors pulsated in lieu of play titles.

How brilliant!

It was enough to make me stop for a celebratory glass of Chardonnay. As I waited for an outside table at Sea Change, I told the manager about riding back from the marriage celebration in Saint Paul. I explained. "I only stopped because of the rainbows—they're so beautiful."

"Yes, it's a great day," the manager, a man named Santi, answered. He was well dressed, polished, and very friendly. "I wished I could have gone," he said.

Then he added, "I'm going to buy you that glass of wine."

How generous!

Just then I realized it was as written above—human to human contact in action. Sometimes it gets you marriage rights. Other times, it gets you a free glass of wine.

I took my wine outside and watched the sun disappear, feeling incredible peace and a wonderful sense of community.

Most of all, I felt at *home*. □

Ellie Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: *A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change.* She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com





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DATELAND | Jennifer Parello

The Allure of Adorable Victims

Like most people who spend way too much time searching for baby animal photos on the World Wide Internets, I have become obsessed with baby sloths. If you have not yet been sucked into the sloth vortex, put down this magazine immediately and type "sloth" into your browser.

If you did as I instructed you above, you have just returned to this column after wasting several hours cooing over sloth photos and videos. Although, is willfully showering yourself in adorableness really a true waste of time? It certainly beats my former practice of cuddling up to much less captivating creatures in bars and in my boudoir.

I have donated a substantial amount of money to sloth societies in the past year. Just enough money for people to question my sanity. I generally do this when drinking wine and reading sad stories about orphaned sloths. Since donating money, my exposure to orphaned sloth stories has multiplied exponentially. I'm now on every sloth mailing list and they wisely blast orphan sloth stories during the prime wine drinking hours of between 7 p.m. and the time you crawl sloth-like into your bed.

The stories typically begin like this: "Tootsie didn't deserve this to happen to her." This is followed by a horrible description of what happened to Tootsie's mother in the jungles of Costa Rica.

Recently, while weeping over little Tootsie's plight and sending another $100 donation via PayPal, it suddenly occurred to me that sloths don't own the market on not deserving the bad things that happen to them. They just happen to be the cutest victims in the world. And when things are cute, you want to give them money and cuddle them.

This explains so many of my relationships. I've always been attracted to cute victims. Pretty, fragile girls who need to be saved from something dreadful—either real or imagined. I swoop in and buy them things they didn't get in their childhood and avenge past wrongs. I cuddle them and protect them. And, then, I grow tired of their relentless whining and their inability to take control to their own lives. I shake my head in disgust as these grown women cling to past hurts like security blankets.

I tell them to "grow up!" and "get over it!" but they never do. Instead, they add me to the long list of things that have wounded and betrayed them. And I toss my hands in the air, walk away, and find a new adorable victim to coo over until she, too, starts to irritate me with her neediness.

I realize that this makes me a monster. The worst thing you can do in this world is to turn on a weaker creature that you have promised to protect. I would never think of betraying an animal in my care. But I have a long, terrifying history of coldly dismissing a vulnerable lover's issues after initially sucking her in by caring too much.

In my dotage, I am trying to change behaviors that have caused people pain. I've considered opening a sanctuary to provide succor to my victims. But each time I think of making amends to former lovers for my many wrongs, I just get annoyed yet again at their collective passivity and merrily embrace my utter badness. And, then, I turn to baby animal photos on the internet to mine my dark soul for slivers of tenderness and I feel less like a monster.

So, while I warn all doe-eyed human creatures to keep their distance, I welcome sloths and their adorable ilk to my heart and my bank account.

(If you're interested in learning more about saving sloths, please visit the Sloth Sanctuary of Costa Rica at www.slothsanctuary.com.) □

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Practicing Proctology Without a License

Dear Ms. Behavior:

I'm not a proctologist (at least not by formal training,) but as a gay man in my extremely early 40s, I've had many first-hand experiences with an amazing variety of assholes. These "exams" have invariably delighted my graciously accommodating partners. However, a recent sexual episode has convinced me that I need the advice of someone who has her finger on the pulse of gay ethics and morals.

My quandary: Last week after immobilizing a very recent (instant) acquaintance with duct tape and clamping a gas mask over his face — not MY scene, but I try to be accommodating — I noticed a strange irregularity in my trick's rectum. A ridged bump just beyond the prostate. Mentioning this suspicious growth at the point of discovery, would have ruined the atmosphere that the sling, mirrors, saran wrap, 50 feet of rope and three lengths of chain had taken several hours to create. (Honestly, these days I sometimes feel more like a combination sailor, mechanic, fashion consultant, and interior decorator than a sex pig.) I figured I could spill the beans after he spilled his load.

Yet after I managed to cut the duct tape off his torso, take the gasmask from his face, and introduce myself, I had second thoughts about my diagnosis. I was honestly concerned for his health, but I am not a physician and I didn't want to needlessly ruin the remnants of his summer vacation with anxious thoughts of colon cancer. I figured I'd have him jot down his e-mail address and perhaps suggest via the Internet that he make an appointment with a qualified physician in his hometown.

Unfortunately, I didn't notice the illegibility of his handwriting until mid afternoon of the next day, three hours after his plane flew out of the airport. (I think the cotton swabs dipped in head cleaner that he insisted I shove into the gas mask tube must have affected his motor skills.) "Sex Pig Kevin in D.C." is vague search criteria even for Google, so I fear locating him may unlikely. I'm worried for my new . . . friend. I feel guilty, but I don't know what to do. My motto has always been "make the world a happier place — one ass at a time." Somehow I feel that I've failed my mission in a most elemental way.

I'm not sure if I'm looking to you for absolution or perhaps asking you to warn others of the negative effects of saran wrap, or head cleaner, or duct tape, or faulty penmanship, or a combination of all the above. I'm in your hands.

–GUILT-RIDDEN

Dear Guilt-ridden:

Clearly, Ms. Behavior needs to write an etiquette manual for sex pigs. Since many of you are gentlemen who are very concerned with the happiness of your partners, you need detailed instruction on gracious ways to proceed in these delicate circumstances.

Upon discovering your date's rectal irregularity, you should have cut off his oxygen supply until he lost consciousness and etched your best guess at his proctology diagnosis into his buttocks (backwards) with a razor. Upon awakening, the painful skin of his rump would have caused your date to look in the mirror, where he would see the crusty scab detailing your medical opinion. He'd immediately know that: a) you're a loving concerned man; b) you're a skilled diagnostician; and c) his ass is safe with you. Of course hindsight is of little use now, so you'll have to think of another way to contact him.

You might try placing an ad in the personal pages of a few D.C.-area gay publications or perhaps some relevant Facebook pages, saying something like, "Kevin, who likes gas masks and duct tape, it's very important that you contact me." Then leave your e-mail address and hope that he'll follow through. Of course, you'll probably have to weed through countless responses from other men who long to be restrained and gassed, but that's the price you're bound to pay for your lack of thoroughness during this recent encounter. □

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Fire in the Flowers

Stunning unreality.

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Then, explosive nausea. It shoots from my stomach and into my spine. It rushes my head, cuts down through my lungs and into my veins. Vomit-inducing anxiety fills me.

And fire. I feel like I'm on fire.

I'm in a flower-strangled bedroom: there's a floral comforter covering floral sheets; there are floral curtains against floral wallpaper; none of the patterns match, no color scheme's apparent. It's summer. There are Bluejays on Mama's clothesline and squirrels in the bird feeder. From sun-baked streets rises mosquito-ridden Carolina humidity, like the steam from Mama's frying pan.

I hear my friends playing outside, waiting for me to return with my homemade Wizard's mantle. My grandmother fashioned it for me from an old pillowcase and a couple of safety pins. I keep it here, under the bed in the guest room.

I'm laying on itchy brown carpet reaching for my costume when my arm brushes an upside-down Kmart shoebox. It moves too easily out of my way, as if nothing were under to resist.

There should be.

I keep a secret under this shoebox: a notebook, college-ruled, spiral-bound. It's a pathetic thing I bought for fifty cents from a discount store called Rose's. Inside I write sexual fantasies I have of my friends and classmates–"queer" fantasies, my father would say. He is the first thing I think about. I hear in my head his domineering voice saying in disgust, "queer."

I stop reaching for my costume. My heart speeds up. What if my notebook isn't there? What if someone's found it? My family will know I'm "queer." They'll hate me.

I beg God: Please, please have left it unfound. I'll throw it out right away and I'll never think those sinful thoughts again. Please, God. I turn over the shoebox. My vision tunnels. Everything blurs.

My journal is missing.

God.

I scramble. I'm just overlooking it, I must be. A thousand times I check around the box. It CAN'T be gone. I stand up, shaking, and walk fast-paced around the room, thinking so many things that I can think nothing at all. I'm hot all over. I'm dizzy. I'm nauseous. I'm scared.

Someone's found my secret, and they now know the dirty, "queer" things I think about.

Who would've known? Who would've taken it?

I think about how my family will respond, what they will say, and I start thinking up excuses in response. I must have an escape. How about: A friend wrote it and asked me to keep it. He wanted to pretend he was me, which is why it's written from my point of view. That'll work. Right?

My family won't love me if they know I'm "queer." They'll throw me out with Mama's frying grease.

I'm so hot I'm sweating. I want to vomit. My fingers tingle from the anxiety.

My friends are knocking at the bedroom window now, asking me to come outside. I barely can hear them for the ringing in my ears, and I can't respond. I can't breathe. I want to die.

I'll tell my family I know nothing of it. I'll just deny everything and everything will go away.

My heart feels as if it's slamming against my rib cage. My face feels sunburned. And the flowers. All the fucking flowers. I'm trapped in a floral-painted nightmare; this is God's way of punishing me for being "queer."

I curl up in the corner of the room and cry. I want my mom, but she'll hate me, too.

Minutes ago I was running around Mama's backyard with a stick I found by a dogwood tree. It was my wizard's wand. But with a wand of such great power, a friend told me, I must wear a cape with which to hide it. So I left my wand outside to come in and fetch one.

And here I am now among the flowers, an arm's length from my cape, and a million miles from my wand. □

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